

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

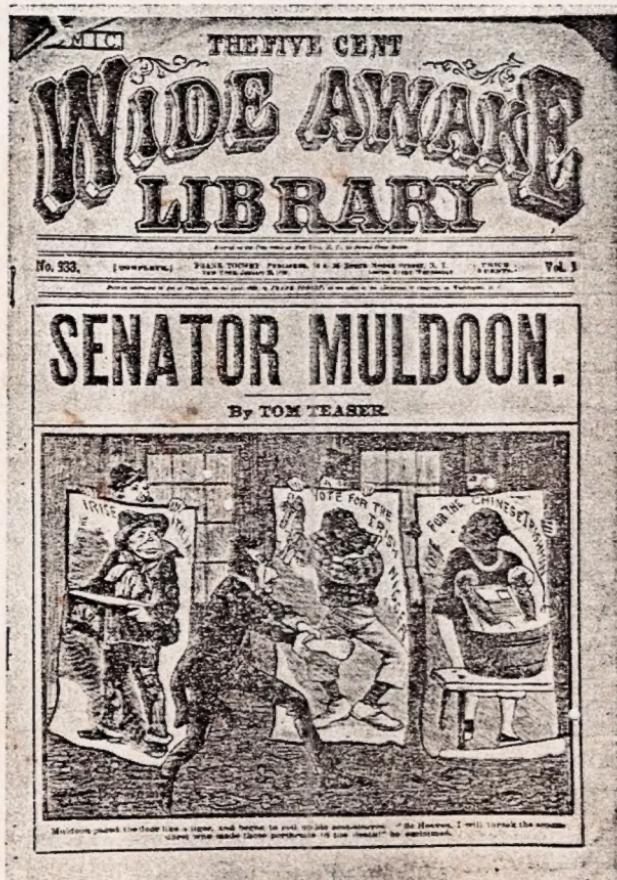
Vol. 25 No. 5

May 15, 1957

Whole No. 296

CECIL BURLEIGH—One of the Comic Writers

by Ralph Adimari



One of the Muldoon stories appearing in Wide Awake Library
(From the Charles Duprez Dime Novel Picture Collection)

**CECIL BURLEIGH
ONE OF THE COMIC WRITERS**
by Ralph Adimari

Mr. Daniel Dunn and his sister Mrs. Davis who had a second hand bookstore for the first third of this century on Fulton Street, Brooklyn, were astonished when I told them Cecil Burleigh had written comic stories. They could not believe their ears.

They described him as a rather tall spare man with an asthenic face as if he never had eaten a square meal. To go with this he had a weak voice. He touched his long moustache and ears continuously due to nervousness. In fact this nervous habit kept him from business success because he could not talk coherently once the attack came upon him. He certainly did not look at all like a comic writer and yet he had written them for Frank Tousey from 1886 to about 1910 and they were genuinely funny. They had known him only as the author of the Liberty Boys of '76, a complete opposite of the comic stories.

When S. A. D. Cox gave up writing The Liberty Boys either through illness or death, Cecil Burleigh took over and wrote them to the end of the run about 1913. To his credit, Burleigh was very fastidious about getting the historical facts correct so that his Liberty Boys went through the American Revolution on historic-

ally correct adventures. He was constantly in Dunn's store looking for reference books.

The Liberty Boys of '76 were a success from the start and it is to Burleigh's credit that he was able to keep boys interested in them for almost 15 years. No one else except Cox who had originated or introduced them to the public had written any.

After the end of the original stories in 1913, Burleigh stopped writing nickel novels and in fact wrote only one series of 4 boys' stories called the Hilltop Boys by Cyril Burleigh (Cecil) published in 1917 by New York Book Company. They were in cloth and were meant to be a competition to other cloth series for boys then prevalent. It failed, however, because the publishers gave them little publicity.

However, Burleigh had already given up completely on boys literature. In a letter to William J. Benners he stated, "I am entirely out of that line (dime novels and boys books) of work which itself is a dead letter . . . I prefer to drop the business just as it has dropped me." (April 10, 1918).

To the New York Times on March 7, 1915, Burleigh in a letter complained that the movies "ruined" the dime novel and other boys literature. Only a few years before in 1912 the dime novel was marching forward. Burleigh claims that he had seen

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publication in the following month's issue.

Spanish translations in Spain of Buffalo Bill and Nick Carter, translations of Nick Carter in French in Paris, while the English were reading Frank Reade and Jack Wright (and he could have added Deadwood Dick) for many years.

Cecil Burleigh came from a family of writers, his father was famous enough to be called "The Liberty Poet." They said of William Henry Burleigh "his history is the history of abolition, of temperance and of human progress" . . . his mother according to the same genealogy was Harriet Adelia Frink and gave birth to Cecil October 1, 1850 in Syracuse, New York. She died in May 1863 and his father, William, remarried to Celia who was an earnest abolitionist like himself as well as a poetess. She was famous, too. The family moved to Brooklyn in 1860 and there Cecil received his education and lived to 1913 when he moved to Middle Hope, New York. He married May Halsey Miller who bore him a son, Richard Cecil, a member of our brotherhood.

According to Daniel Dunn, Burleigh was making as high as \$4000 then falling down to \$2000 a year writing dime novels and the like, but he was a free spender and was no "cheapskate" in any way. While he was a cold sort of fellow he was not penurious or miserly. His nervous ailment is what repelled others, not his disposition. He could have found friends if he had only made an effort. Dunn never spoke of him except with great respect and sympathy and certainly not pity.

Burleigh started his illustrious career with Frank Tousey in 1880 and stayed on until 1915 or 1916 and never wrote dime or nickel novels for any other publisher. According to Lu Senarens in a letter to me (since lost) Burleigh started writing sea stories and railroad adventures for Tousey and since W. Cushing credits him with Albert J. Booth and Capt. Will Dayton we can be sure of it since these pseudonyms wrote sea stories.

But the most important event in

his life came in 1886 after the death of Edward Ten Eyck Sept. 8, 1886, when Tousey lost his great comic writer. What to do? In one of those inspirational moves that Tousey would come up with (to the aghast surprise of Mr. Warford) he chose the unlikely Cecil Burleigh to fill not only the shoes of one of the great humorists of the United States, but also of another one, the red headed Bricktop known as George G. Small who had died March 10, 1886, a few months before "Ed." Despite all the misgivings and so on the unpredictable Cecil made such a success of the comic stories that he wrote them all the way to about 1910. I was assured by Mr. Warford and Lu Senarens that no one else wrote them. And my own study of them convinces me that only one writer had a hand in them. Despite the fact that they were written in haste and to fill a certain amount of space in Boys of New York or Happy Days they have great charm and wonderful humor. Try one. Together with the cartoons illustrating the serials by Thomas Worth, genius in the art of drawing comic figures you are in another world, that of comedy. What astounded Burleigh's associates was that a man with such a dour disposition should have succeeded so completely as a comic writer. According to Mrs. Davis, Cecil was a genuine gentleman so that, too, was a surprise to them that he had ever written comics. But, when I showed them that his comic characters were touring the world, the exact knowledge of places and geography convinced the book dealer and his sister that Burleigh had had a hidden facet in his bag of tricks that they had never even in a remote way suspected. They believed like all the rest of humanity, "If you're a cold fish, stay one, don't have human feelings or you may astonish us."

Burleigh himself revealed very little about himself to Mr. William J. Benner who tried to draw him out. He admits writing as D. W. Stevens with J. R. Musick as well as others not identified but gives no other in-

formation about himself except that he had joined Tousey in 1880 and never had written for Street & Smith. In his letter to the New York Times as already quoted he did admit writing part of the following: Frank Reade, Jack Wright, Shorty, Jim Grimes, Tommy Bounce, Muldoon, Tim Finnegan and others not identified.

So little is known about what he wrote that his obituary notices don't even claim the Liberty Boys for him. Who's Who 1906-07 does not even identify the publisher (Tousey) he wrote for from 1880. All the dates are correct but positively no information on what he wrote. And for this only Burleigh himself was to blame. He had a passion for anonymity. This was in direct contrast to William O. Stoddard whose biography in Who's Who the same year as Burleigh's recounts all his boy's books taking up nearly a full column to do it. So there was no excuse for Burleigh, Who's Who was willing.

In a letter to me from Cecil's Son, Richard C. Burleigh, July 3, 1956, the writer says his "father was a cabin boy on an old whaler and from this was to write many whaling stories." He wrote movie material for Photo Play and Motion Picture Stories, the latter being a new Tousey effort.

I found that he also wrote poetry for the New York Ledger, The Magazine Maker, Truth Seeker, Waverly Magazine and perhaps others not identified.

He also wrote a cloth book unique in its way, a love story in the form of mounted clippings called "The Parts of the Puzzle," Philadelphia, 1913.

I was going to put in a claim for him as "father of comics" but after a long study of the question, I shall withdraw that claim. I believe Richard F. Outcault who died in September 1928 who originated Buster Brown and Yellow Kid and who was called "Father of the American Comic Strip" has an equal claim.

I would go with the New York World which in an editorial quoted in Editor and Publisher, September 29,

1928, says that it was a series of steps that led to the comic strip and I may add to the comics of today (the dime novel, comic strip co-joined). This is one controversy that I refuse to enter upon. But it would shock them into surprise if George G. Small, Edward E. Ten Eyck and Cecil Burleigh were to see the child of their brains of yesterday in the booming comics of today, a financial giant that dwarfs the dime novel into insignificance. And there is the same kind of wild joy that was apparent in the works of Bricktop and Burleigh of yesterday that is today the chief feature of the comics.

From all available sources, statements, and positive indications, Cecil Burleigh wrote under the following pseudonyms: Cyril Burleigh, Noname, Caleb Burt, Albert J. Booth, Capt. Will Dayton, Sam Smiley, Tom Teaser, Peter Pad, N. S. Wood, D. W. Stevens, Harry Moore (Liberty Boys of '76).

He may have written a few stories for the colored cover weeklies other than Liberty Boys for Tousey, but I found no evidence about them.

Of the above nom de plumes the following were shared with others: Harry Moore shared with S. A. D. Cox (who started the Liberty Boys of '76). Noname shared with at least two writers, Lu Senarens and Harry Enton who originated the Frank Reade stories. Peter Pad, shared with George G. Small at least, and maybe Edward Ten Eyck. D. W. Stevens shared with John R. Musick and with others not known. Tom Teaser shared with either/or George G. Small and Edward E. Ten Eyck.

Cecil Burleigh had made a very good living from dime novels. Yet in his statements to William J. Benners, who deserved better replies, he is less than courteous. In a plea for his pen names Cecil replies "Cecil Burleigh or unsigned." In a question on W. I. James, Jr. (Bertie Harcourt) "Don't know and don't care."

But he certainly wakes up at the mention of Harry Collingwood. "Collingwood is an English writer. New

York publishers stole his stuff." So bitter must have Burleigh been that he could not have swallowed this. He had to erupt at people who had given him a darn good living for more than 35 years and now he was able to say they "stole." He could give gratuitous information of a kind Mr. Benners did not want but said nothing about what Mr. Benners really desired and which he was in a position to give. In a letter dated April 10, 1918, Middle Hope New York to Benners he ends "never heard of such a word as confrereship." What Benners was trying to get over was that he wanted the information because of sentiment. This Burleigh scoffed at. It was claimed that when Burleigh lost his writing career it created a financial difficulty which lasted the last few years of his life and this may explain his actions towards such a genial fellow as Benners. Probably it was a blessing to him when he died unexpectedly at 71, December 2, 1921, at his home in West Nyack, New York.

Yet not a single mention was made at the time that he had been the famous writer of Liberty Boys for ever so many years. The old order was definitely over since now boys were interested in a new media, the motion picture and as a matter of fact so were adults.

NEWSY NEWS
by Ralph F. Cummings
Fisherville, Mass.

Don Russell, of The Westerners Brand Book (Mag.) says there's to be a fine article on the Mississippi and Western panoramas—close to the dime novel line of interest. It will be worthy of anyone's collection. It's to appear in the March issue.

Albert E. Johnson still is annoyed by that spot in his eye, and can't seem to get rid of it, oh if he only knew of a good cure for it, as he misses the reading of the old timers, you bet. Al sent me a clipping of the old book store in his section, that's gone or is going out of business. Says he has bought and sold some books

at the place. Seems that Roland D. Elderkin, who bought the book store from the once popular "Old Jones Bookstore" quite some time ago, at 1220 J. St., Sacramento, Calif. It was founded 48 years ago, and he sure hates to see it go. I too would hate to see it go, you bet.

J. C. Dykes, 4511 Guilford Rd., College Park, Md., is wondering where he can get Bob Brooks Library #22 also Diamond Dick Jr. Weekly #237?

Frisco Bert and his mate expect to be back home in California about May 1st. They sure have been doing some traveling, Wow!

Now for a few words from Carl Linville. Carl says he doesn't hear any more about the Happy Hours Brotherhood members having a convention! He wants to know what happened. And Joe Krajic says that Canton, Ohio, is the ideal spot for it, for he can get a place for us should we decide to come there. So far, I haven't heard any more on the subject? Guess it would be a big undertaking, but still it can be done.

Carl also asked how about an anniversary no. for the Roundup? No. 300 will soon be here, coming with the Sept. issue. No. 295 of the Roundup has already appeared, and when this appears it will be another number or two added on. So brother members, how about a real special anniversary number. How many of the brothers will send in an extra dollar for just such a number? Both Carl and I are ready to send in \$1.00 each, to help get up such a number, and we expect a real number it to be, so who else will go along with us on this venture? Write to Edward T. Le Blanc, 87 School St., Fall River, Mass. what you'll do Pards. So let's all get behind Eddie, and show him what we can do in helping to bring out an anniversary number in September.

Joseph Krajic of Canton, Ohio, gave a lecture and talk on the old dime and nickel novels to the members of the Loyal Mens Bible Class of 21 and out of the 21, 11 hands were raised by men who used to read the old novels when they were youngsters.

I haven't seen Eli Messier for so long, I've almost forgotten what he looks like.

Charlie Duprez is out of the hospital, and his wife went in for an operation, if I'm not mistaken, think she is out, and at home now.

Remember Tom C. Grant (Silver Tip) and Richard Clarke (Deadwood Dick) that used to be Honorary members of our own Happy Hours Brotherhood, both their pictures and letter from each are in the article on "Shot and Left to Die," by Buffalo Vernon, in the "True West" mag. for Feb. 1957. Pub. by Western Publications. P. O. Box 5008—709 West 19th St., Austin, Tex, 25c per copy. There is also a fine article on "Mad Killers of El Dorado Canyon, by Nell Murbarger. (I believe this gang was some of the Butch Cassidy Hole-in-the-Wall Gang, but not sure.)

Harry A. Weill went on a little vacation last summer, says the vacation was gone before he knew it. He expects to see an article of his in the Roundup before long.

"The Cup of Fury," by Upton Sinclair that came out a short while ago has a chapter in it on the "True Blue Weekly," so it should be very interesting. Channel Press, Inc., 159 Northern Boulevard, Great Neck, N. Y. has it for sale.

KIT CARSON— AN EYE WITNESS WORD By Rev. Roland D. Sawyer

Those of us older men who got our first knowledge of the great figures of the old west from the Beadle publications and some others, are delighted when we run into some contemporary words about them.

Last week I bought at a country auction a book published by subscription in 1867 under the title "Beyond The Mississippi." It is a collection of experiences of men in that country, 1857-1865. On page 257 is a picture of Kit Carson, dressed in his best civilian clothing. He has a face that is strong, intellectual and noble.

The writer was in 1859 returning

from Santa Fe to Kansas City thru the land where the Kiowa Indians had just been at war and blocked travel. His landlord introduced him to Kit Carson who rode along with him.

Kit is described thus, "He was a middle aged man, straight brown hair, mild eye and kindly face, dressed in a suit of gray; his head and face showed strength of mind and character."

His home was at Taos, hither I was going, and we rode there together. My landlord told me aside, "He is the greatest of the Mountain men and has made the most daring and reckless rides known in the west."

I had been sick and was not too strong and my blood tingled to keep up with Carson as we galloped along.

His favorite delight was to dash down every hill at full gallop—I really shuddered to keep side of him, but as I rode a strong-footed Indian pony and he a large American horse and I felt the odds were in my favor. When Kit dismounts he looked stout and ungraceful, so much in the saddle at an early age had made him bowlegged but once on the horse he is graceful and at home.

Except for down the hills we galloped along leisurely and Kit talked of his life and experiences. He told of his happiness as a mountain trapper, of his food and manner of living there, of attacks by Indians whom he had outwitted, but he never bragged, only by my questions did I draw out the accounts of his exploits.

He said the mountain men went up into the mountains, dressed like the Indians, bought a squaw to keep house and lighten labors, lived on beaver and buffalo meat with bread and vegetables which the Indians knew how to raise. The life fascinated Kit and he liked to tell of it.

But in answer to my queries he told a harrowing story of being one of four trappers, holed up and holding at bay 150 Blackfeet Indians and finally outwitting them and escaping.

Another time, when young, he was one of six, who in camp were attacked by Sioux, who crawled in

dressed as wolves, rapping two bones together to resemble a wolf snapping his jaws, then sprang up and shooting his five companions dead—then came his greatest hardship of his life, after his faithful horse aided him to escape he later had to kill and eat him to keep from starving.

He admired and loved Fremont for whom he acted as guide and told many stories of their years spent together.

BEADELS STANDARD LIBRARY OF ROMANCE

By Rev. Roland D. Sawyer

I wonder how many of our readers are acquainted with the Beadles STANDARD LIBRARY OF ROMANCE?

They were a series of cloth-bound books of around 125-140 pages, good type, and ranking as high as any of the novels published around 1860 and better than most.

Many of them were made by piecing together four or five short stories of the length of the first yellow

covered dime novels. I have before me such a copy, entered 1862.

The first story by A. J. H. Du-ganne is "The King's Man, a Story of the Reolution in South Carolina."

A second story is "The French Captives, a Story of the Daughter of Massasoit," by the same author.

The third is "The Young Man's Ward" by Madge Wynde.

The type is about the same size of page the same as the first yellow covered stories and represents the attempts to put some selected of the early tales into board and cloth bound covers.

I doubt if the experiment paid and I think copies are not easy to locate.

EXCHANGE COLUMN

For Sale—About 60 Ted Strong's, thick size, S&S, Good condition plus 25 Tip Tops. All for \$20.00 plus postage. Jack R. Schorr, 11572 So. Cypress St., Orange, California.

Wanted—Handsome Harry, Comrades, True Blue, Do and Dare and many more. L. D. Webster, 811 North Green Ave., Lake Worth, Florida.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- 98. J. W. Martin, 4 Meadow Lane, Redwood City, Calif. (new address)
- 203. Tom Moriarty, 57-33 160th St., Flushing 65, N. Y. (new member)
- 93. Everett L. Cline, 628 Guaranty Bank Bldg., Denver 2, Colo. (new add.)
- 57. L. D. Webster, 811 No. Green Ave., Lake Worth, Fla. (new address)

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Pluck and Luck. Large size. #901 to 925. Fine. \$25.00.

Wild West. Large size. #645 to 699. Fine. \$40.00.

(If you want any early numbers of Tousey's big six, why don't you send your want list?)

Tip Top Weekly (1896) All one color cover. Complete, average to good. #3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 19 and 20. The lot, \$12.00.

New York Ledger. Volume 43 #1 to 47. Fair only. Among other things, there are 4 complete Sylvanus Cobb serials: The Spectre Baron, Marion's Uncle, The Knight's Motto, The Faithful Mate. This lot for only \$4.00.

New York Weekly. 1887 complete, 52 issues. Bound, backstrip in poor condition, papers good. Contains among other things, complete serials: Nick Carter in A Wall Street Haul; Ned Buntline's Texas Jack, the White King of the Pawnees; Horatio Alger's Oliver, the Outcast. \$12.50.

Wild West (Street & Smith magazine) 50c per copy.

Fireside Companion. Big bound volume, in fine condition, #427 to 531. \$25.00

Remember the colored illustrated comic weeklies, Judge and Puck? Complete years and volumes on hand. Also single copies at 5 for \$1.00.

Frank Tousey's Arm Chair (story paper), started in 1879. A long run from #1, to 296 with #20 missing, otherwise complete, mostly fine, several poor. This run as follows: #1 to 52 loose (lacks #20); #53 to 104 bound, front cover loose; #105 to 156 bound, covers loose; #157 to 208 bound without covers on volume; #209 to 260, bound, covers loose; #261 to 296 loose, of which #286 is poor, and last two numbers are badly torn. The entire lot for \$60.00.

Golden Hours #201 to 218. \$12.00. #679 to 692, fair, \$3.50.

Boys of New York. Your chance to get a nice lot of numbers. A bound volume containing 58 numbers between #753 and 883, not consecutive, at the low price of only \$40.00.

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Lawrence, Mass.